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March, 2001

Dr. Bernard Schwetz, Acting Commissioner,
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20852

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Dear Mr. Schwetz

I am writing to ask for a moratorium on the use of irradiation on food products sold in the United States, now that new studies have come to light confirming the long suspected dangers of these products to human health.

Public Citizen recently released the world's first English translation of a recent German study — done by German irradiation proponents — revealing that a chemical formed in irradiated food can cause genetic mutations. The study confirmed what safe-food advocates and many pioneering researchers have known for more than 30 years: Exposing food to ionizing radiation can lead to the formation of bizarre new chemicals called "unique radiolytic products" that can cause serious health problems. One such chemical found in this study, known as 2-DCB, caused "significant DNA damage" in the colons of rats that ate the substance. This chemical — which, ironically, is a well-known "marker" for determining whether food has been irradiated — has never been found naturally in any food on Earth.

Even the FDA admits there are no high quality studies on the long-term safety of irradiated foods. In fact, the FDA has dismissed a vast body of scientific evidence suggesting that irradiated food may not be safe to eat. Dozens of experiments conducted since the 1950s have revealed a variety of health problems in animals that have consumed irradiated food, including premature death, a rare form of cancer, fatal internal bleeding, chromosome aberrations, stillbirths, nutritional deficiencies and liver damage. Additionally, irradiation cannot kill the pathogen that causes "mad cow" disease, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization.

Now that we know that irradiation of our food is not safe, please end this nuclear waste treatment of our food supply. It is unnecessary, and now we have confirmation that it is unsafe.

Sincerely yours,

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